

CATHOLICOS JOHN III'S
AGAINST THE PAULICIANS
AND THE PAULICIANS OF TEPHRIKE

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The community of Tephrike (Divrig/Divrighi), situated some 60 miles southeast of Sebastia (Sepastia; Sebasteia) along the Byzantine-Arab border, seems to have been a considerable nuisance to the Byzantine Empire. From this stronghold and hotbed of the Paulician heresy, raiding parties looted Byzantine territories until Tephrike's military contingents were finally defeated by the emperor Basil I (867-86) in 872 and, after a subsequent earthquake, it was forced to surrender in 878.¹ Tephrike is a part of the history of Lesser Armenia, not least of all because it was a formidable Paulician center. Its origins, geography, and history all connect Paulicianism with Armenia and, despite the opinions of some scholars to the contrary, there are grounds for regarding the beliefs of the Paulicians in Tephrike as fundamentally the same as those of much earlier Paulicians in Greater Armenia itself. By 872, however, Tephrike was neither monolithically Paulician nor Armenian. Significantly, the decline in power of the Paulician sect coincided with the decline of the Armenian element within it.

The Armenian Character of Paulicianism

Paulicianism was an Armenian heresy. This is clear first of all from the two texts, one Armenian and one Greek (Byzantine), that illuminate the spread of the movement. Catholicos John of

¹ Paul Lemerle, "L'histoire des Pauliciens d'Asie Mineure d'après les sources grecques," *Travaux et Mémoires* 5 (1973): 1-144, esp. 102-08.

Odzun/Hovhannes III Odznetsi (717-28), in his *Against the Paulicians*,² states that the Paulicians were rebuked by Catholicos Nerses and that after his death they fled into hiding “on the borders.”³ Unfortunately, John does not specify which Nerses he meant. Scholars have disagreed as to whether it was Nerses II (548-57) or Nerses III (641-61). Nerses III, as the more recent, has seemed to many scholars the more likely meaning, and this would accord with the other key source.⁴ This is a Greek text, a *History of the Paulicians*, written in about 870 by an author known now as Peter of Sicily, who visited Tephrike as a Byzantine ambassador in 869-70.⁵ Peter connected Paulicianism

² Hovhannes Odznetsi, *Enddem Paughikiants* [Against the Paulicians], Armenian text and Latin translation in *Tearn Hovhannu Imastasiri Odznetsvoy Matenagrutiunk/Domini Johannis Philosophi Ozniensis Armeniorum Catholici Opera* [The Works of the Philosopher John of Odzun, Catholicos of the Armenians], ed. and trans. Jean-Baptiste Aucher [Mkrtich Avgerian] (Venice: Mekhitarist Press, 1834), pp. 78-107. Short extracts are translated into English in the following sources: Nina G. Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy: A Study of the Origin and Development of Paulicianism in Armenia and the Eastern Provinces of the Byzantine Empire* (The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1967), pp. 132, 135, 165, 226; James R. Russell, *Zoroastrianism in Armenia* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1987), pp. 530, 537-38; Sirarpie Der Nersessian, “Image Worship in Armenia and Its Opponents,” *Armenian Quarterly* 1 (1946): 67-81, esp. 71-72. The work and its author are cited hereafter in their English forms.

³ John of Odzun, *Against the Paulicians*, p. 88 (Armenian), p. 89 (Latin). “Holorts / in quibusdam . . . finibus” seems to signify “on the borders,” though Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy*, p. 132, simply has “somewhere.”

⁴ See, for example, Steven Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee: A Study of the Christian Dualist Heresy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1947, repr. 1955), p. 34; Henri Grégoire, “Pour l’histoire des églises pauliciennes, Καίνοχώριον du Pont, Episparris en Φανάριον,” *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 13 (1947): 509-14, and his “Précisions géographiques et chronologiques sur les Pauliciens,” *Académie Royale de Belgique, Bulletin de la Classe des Lettres* 33 (1947): 289-324; Paul Lemerle, “L’histoire,” pp. 10, 54-56, 61-62, 75. Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy*, pp. 132-33, favors Nerses II, as does Der Nersessian, “Image Worship,” pp. 69-70.

⁵ For Greek text and French translation of this and associated texts, see Charles Astruc, Wanda Conus-Wolska, Jean Gouillard, Paul Lemerle, Denise Papatryssanthou, Joseph Paramelle, “Les sources grecques pour l’histoire des Pauliciens d’Asie Mineure; texte critique et traduction,” *Travaux et Mémoires* 4 (1970): 1-227 (pp. 6-67 for the *History*). For an English translation but with chapters 47-77 omitted, see Janet Hamilton and Bernard Hamilton, *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World c. 650 - c. 1405: Selected Sources Translated and Annotated* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1998), pp. 65-92. For Peter’s visit, see Peter of Sicily, *History*, chaps. 4, 5, 187, 188. The literature about Paulicians and Paulicianism is extensive, and there are differing views about many

with ancient Manichaeism.⁶ Modern scholars regard this connection as a product of library research and a wish to categorize deviance rather than as a historical reality.⁷ But Peter also recorded what he learned from the Paulicians themselves about their history and doctrine.⁸ Thus, what he represents as a recasting of Manichaeism was probably in fact the foundation of Paulicianism. This foundation was the work of an Armenian named Constantine in Mananalis (Armenian: Mananaghi) in Greater Armenia.⁹ On the basis of chronological information later in the text, his ministry may be tentatively dated, as Paul Lemerle has argued, to about 655.¹⁰

That Paulicianism was originally Armenian may also be inferred from the very name "Paulician," which was coined by the non-heretics who observed it. The heretics, as Peter explicitly asserts and as John of Odzun implies, called themselves Christians.¹¹ "Paulician" derives from an Armenian form "Pavlikian," meaning "follower of Paul" with a derogatory diminutive element—that is, "followers of wretched little Paul" or possibly "wretched little followers of Paul."¹² The Armenian origin of the name suggests that the Byzantine authorities took it from Armenian critics, and if Armenians were the first, or most vociferous, to notice these heretics, it is likely that the heretics were themselves Armenian. The name suggests that the critics of the

points in their history. This discussion will cite references only for the points discussed and only the most immediately relevant works. The works and views of different scholars are well summarized in Lemerle, "L'histoire."

⁶ Peter of Sicily, *History*, chaps. 3, 84-86, 99, 100, 112, 135, 138, 170.

⁷ Hamilton and Hamilton, *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 1-2, 4, 7, 8.

⁸ For his sources, see Peter of Sicily, *History*, chap. 188. See also Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 18-19, 22-26.

⁹ Peter of Sicily, *History*, chaps. 94-101.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, chaps. 102, 103, 107, 110, 111; Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 56-62, 84.

¹¹ Peter of Sicily, *History*, chap. 37; John of Odzun, *Against the Paulicians*, pp. 86, 87.

¹² Karapet Ter-Mkrtschian, *Die Paulikianer im byzantinischen Kaiserreiche und verwandte ketzerische Erscheinungen in Armenien* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1893), pp. 63-64, demonstrates the Armenian (rather than Greek) origin of the name while not believing that it actually derives from someone named Paul. See Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy*, pp. 213-14; Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee*, pp. 47, 49; Dmitri Obolensky, *The Bogomils: A Study in Balkan Neo-Manichaeism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948; repr. Twickenham: Anthony C. Hall, 1972), pp. 55-57; Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 54-55.

heretics associated them with a particular "Paul." Scholars have disagreed about the identity of Paul. One possibility is the Apostle Paul, who, according to Peter of Sicily, was particularly venerated by the Paulicians. The leader Constantine limited the permitted biblical reading to the four Gospels and the Apostle Paul. Successive leaders or supreme teachers took for themselves or were given names of Paul's disciples or delegates, and the heretic communities that they founded were likewise accorded names of early Christian ones which St. Paul himself had nurtured. Constantine, for example, called himself Silvanus and his group at Cibossa near Colonia the Church of Macedonia.¹³ But neither the orthodox, on whose opinions Peter drew, nor the heretics seem to have suggested this derivation.¹⁴ A second possibility, favored by Frederick C. Conybeare and Nina G. Garsoïan, is the third-century Paul of Samosata, Bishop of Antioch.¹⁵ His views were Adoptionist; that is, he inclined to the belief that Jesus Christ was born wholly human, of two human parents, and was adopted as the Son of God as a reward for his great virtue.

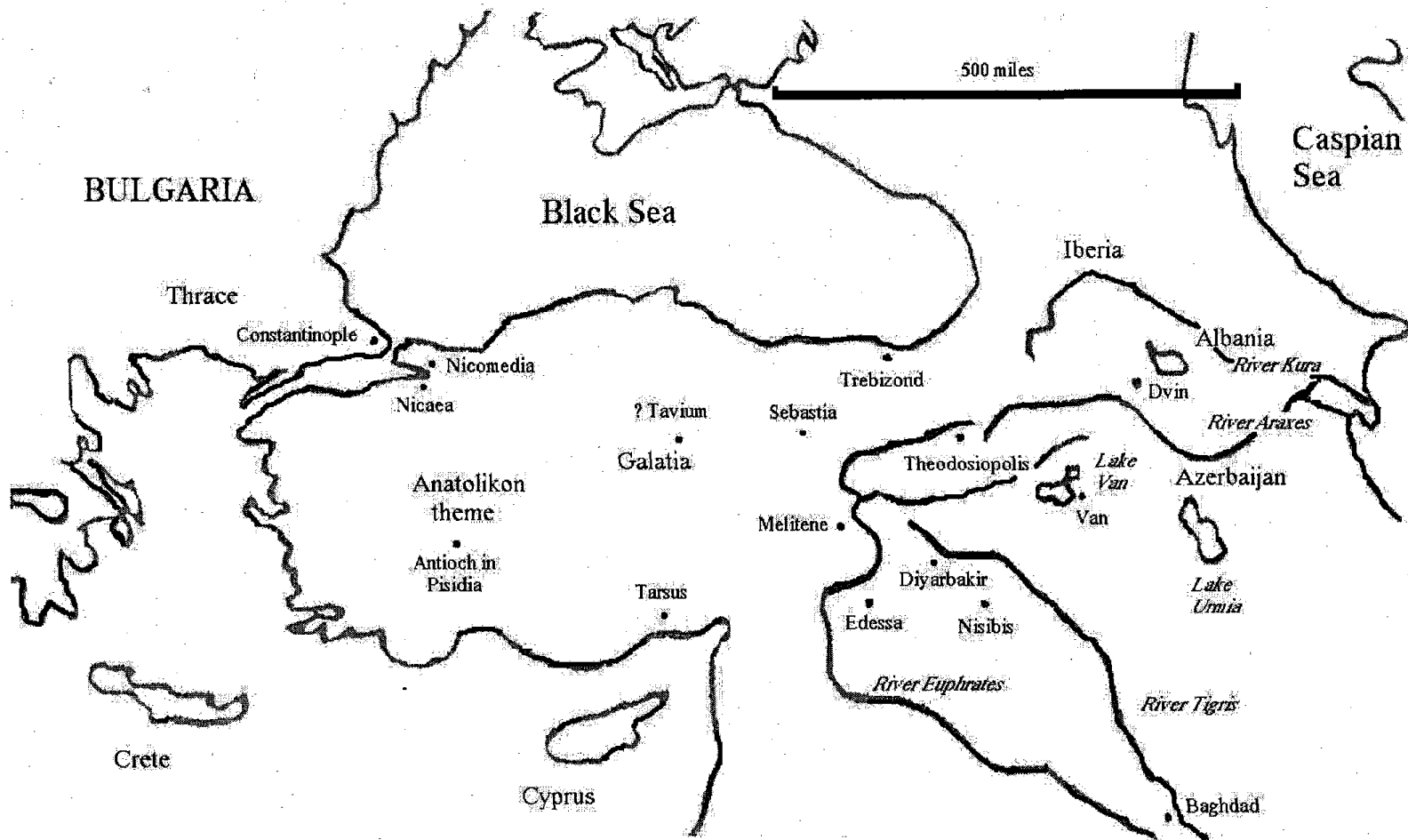
Peter of Sicily connected "Paulician" with a Paul who, according to him, was one of two sons of a Manichaean woman named Callinice from Samosata in Armenia, who sent them out "as preachers of error."¹⁶ This Paul would predate Constantine-Silvanus, but he is not universally recognized as a historical figure. He may be a doublet for another, later, Armenian Paul in Peter's account, who seems to have saved the sect by fleeing after it was persecuted and many of its adherents burned in Colonia in the time of Emperor Justinian II (685-95, 705-11) and to have established a dynastic right of leadership, putting forward his own son, Gegnesius-Timothy, as teacher. The leadership of this Paul's lasted for approximately thirty years

¹³ Peter of Sicily, *History*, chaps. 96, 101, 107, 113, 129, 152, 163. The location of Cibossa is unknown.

¹⁴ The apostle is favored by Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee*, pp. 47-49.

¹⁵ F.C. Conybeare, *The Key of Truth: A Manual of the Paulician Church of Armenia*, ed. and trans., with illustrative documents and introduction (Armenian text, English translation) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898), pp. cv, cvi; Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy*, pp. 210-20.

¹⁶ Peter of Sicily, *History*, chaps. 85, 86, 93. By Samosata in Armenia Peter means Arsamosata.



Asia Minor and Armenia in Paulician Times

until about 718.¹⁷ He may be the Pol who in an Armenian *Catalogue of Heresies* appears in Heresy No. 154, in an entry more legendary than historical, as someone who spread heresy.¹⁸ Derivation of the name "Paulician" from this Paul would explain why its first (undisputed) appearance in Armenian sources is in those two that are associated with Catholicos John III, namely Canon 32 of the 719 Council of Dvin, which condemned Paulicianism, and John's own treatise *Against the Paulicians*. Such a derivation conflicts with the fact of two apparently earlier references to Paulicians, one in the *Call to Repentance* of Catholicos John I (478-90) and one in the so-called Oath of Union of the 555 Council of Dvin. But their authenticity is disputed and they may be errors or interpolations of copyists; both survive in thirteenth-century manuscripts.¹⁹ In some of the manuscripts of the 719 Dvin canons, a misspelling is used: *Paylikiank* instead of *Pavlikiank*, giving a name which means "filthy in life." Garsoïan believes that this distortion was deliberate, in order to be as disparaging as possible.²⁰

The places which, according to Byzantine and Armenian sources, were Paulician centers in the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries were predominantly in areas with a significant Armenian population. Paulicianism did indeed extend farther west. In Byzantium there was the church in Cibossa near Colonia (which in antiquity had been part of Lesser Armenia), founded by Constantine-Silvanus and still strong in 844 when its adherents captured the imperial governor (whom they handed over to fellow Paulicians at Argaoun, near Tephrike, but on the Arab side of

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, chaps. 111-13. Paul's son and successor died of plague, probably in the epidemic of 748, apparently also after thirty years of leadership and was succeeded by his own son and then his grandson. See Obolensky, *The Bogomils*, pp. 55-57. Milan Loos, "Deux contributions à l'histoire des Pauliciens. 2. Origine du nom des Pauliciens," *Byzantinoslavica* 18 (1957): 202-17, regards the two Pauls as one and the same and behind the name "Paulician." Lemerle, "L'histoire," p. 64, believes the Paulicians regarded Gegnesius-Timothy's father as their eponym.

¹⁸ See Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy*, pp. 131n78, 135-36, for the possible identification, and pp. 102-04, 112-13, 239-40, for discussion, translation, and text of the two entries relating to Paulicianism. The date of the earliest extant manuscript is 1315.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 87-90, 236-38; Lemerle, "L'histoire," p. 54; Hamilton and Hamilton, *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 292-93.

²⁰ Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy*, pp. 92n36, 210, 213-14.

the frontier).²¹ Another church was at Antioch in Pisidia in central Anatolia, founded in the mid-eighth century; and there were nests in between, for the Paulicians' ninth-century leader Sergius-Tychicus originated from the region of the city of Tavium in Galatia.²²

There were a number of centers in Armenia itself. Mananalis, where Constantine-Silvanus had begun, was reinfected by Paul's son Gegnesius-Timothy (a contemporary of John), who fled there after being examined for heresy in Constantinople, and it was still a center at the time Peter of Sicily was writing. Episparis was a refuge for Paulicians in flight from persecution in Cibossa in the late 680s and from dissension in Mananalis in the mid-eighth century.²³ There were probably Paulicians in neighboring Caucasian Albania in the early eighth century when a council of the Albanian Church (subordinate to the Church of Armenia), which was held sometime between 702 and 705 and is reported in the twelfth-century *History* of Samvel Anetsi (Samuel of Ani), condemned Paulicians.²⁴

Southwestern Armenia was beset with Paulicians. John III attests their presence in Tsrka (Jrkay), which has been identified as being the neighborhood of the Bitlis River.²⁵ The valley of the Batman River seems also to have been an area of Paulician activity at some time, perhaps beginning at much the same period as it became manifest at Tsrka. It is near Tsrka, and its name seems not only to be an equivalent of the name (Sheti) of the woman seduced, according to No. 154 of the *Catalogue of Heresies*, by the mysterious Pol but also connected to another proper name in another legend, in No. 153 of the *Catalogue* (which

²¹ Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 88-90; Hamilton and Hamilton, *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 63-65.

²² Peter of Sicily, *History*, chaps. 128, 129, 132.

²³ *Ibid.*, chaps. 94, 95, 101, 112, 121, 122, 127. The location of Episparis, which is otherwise unknown, is a matter of disagreement, but it is likely to have been between Cibossa and Mananalis. See Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 77-78.

²⁴ See Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy*, pp. 92-94, for commentary and translation; Lemerle, "L'histoire," p. 10, where the date 702-705 is given.

²⁵ John of Odzun, *Against the Paulicians*, pp. 88, 89; George Huxley, "The Historical Geography of the Paulician and Tondrakian Heresies," in Thomas J. Samuelian and Michael E. Stone, eds., *Medieval Armenian Culture* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984), pp. 81-95. See also Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy*, pp. 130-31, 135n100.

refers explicitly to Paulicianism). The Batman River passes through Sasun. George Huxley is tempted to regard the “psalm-reciting Sanasnaik,” that is, the mountain people of Khoyt whom the late ninth-century Tovma Artsruni describes in his account of mid-century events, as a branch of the Paulicians in Heresy No. 153.²⁶

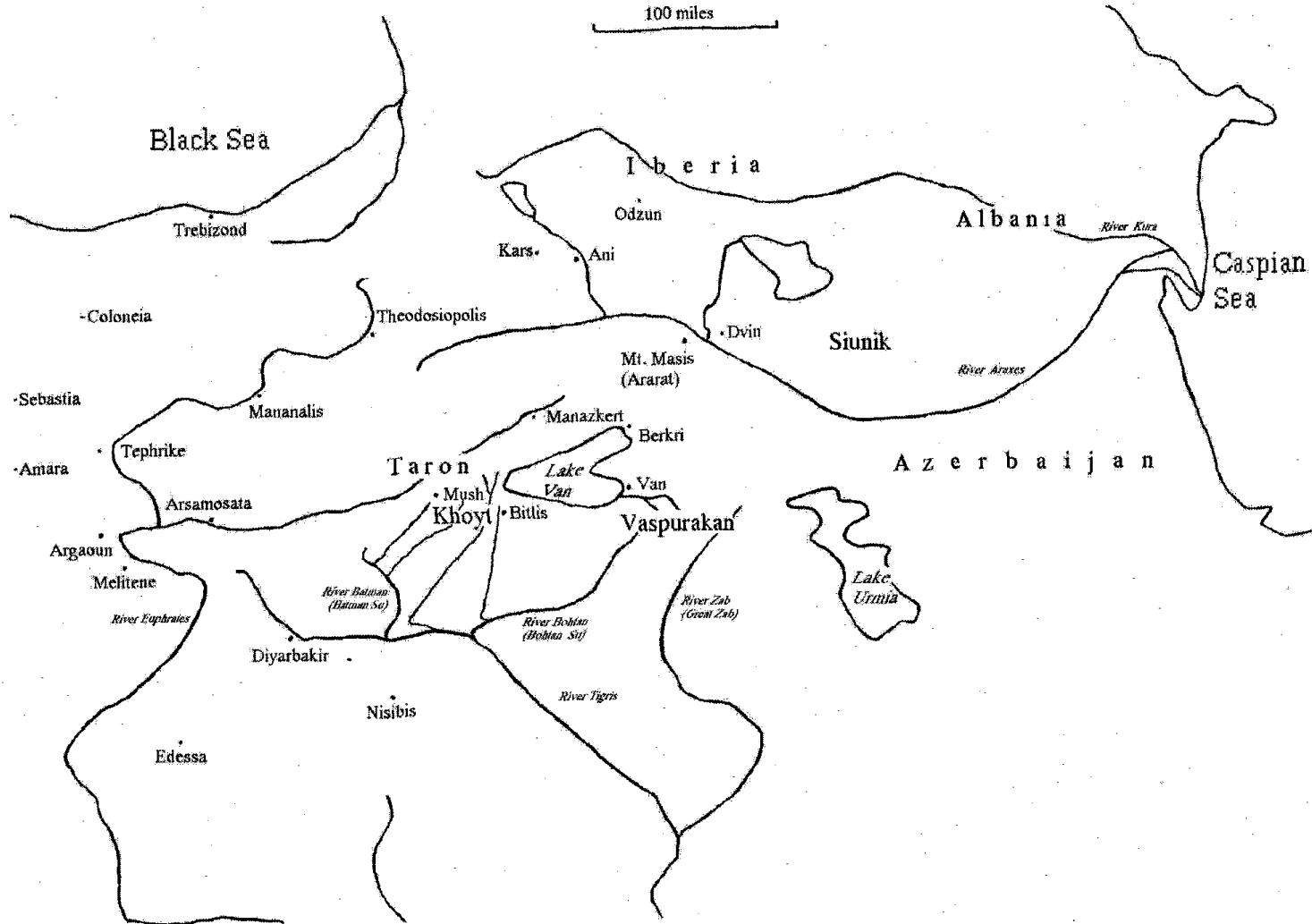
Paulicianism was also a phenomenon of the Armenian borderlands. The towns of Theodosiopolis/Karin—once an Armenian city—and of Melitene/Malatia also had Paulician elements in John’s time. The Byzantine chronicler Theophanes (circa 760-817/18) asserts that it was the transfer of people from these cities to Thrace by the emperor Constantine V in 756/57 that spread Paulicianism there.²⁷ Melitene in the ninth century proved a refuge for the Paulician leader Sergius-Tychicus and his disciples, fleeing Byzantine persecution (or, more precisely, persecution and the consequences of having assassinated the oppressive governor and the archbishop). Argaoun, some 25 miles north, was granted to them by Melitene’s Muslim emir. Tephrike, about 35 miles north again and just over the frontier, was founded by the Paulicians’ next leader, Carbeas, previously an official of the governor of Byzantium’s Anatolikon Theme (province), after Argaoun had been outgrown. Carbeas “prepared” Tephrike “as a convenient refuge for those who faced death in Romania on account of this heresy” and also encouraged “people from the frontier areas” near it to settle there.²⁸

Finally, Paulicians at Tephrike should be considered as part of Armenian history because for more than 150 years, with the

²⁶ Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy*, pp. 112-13, 130-31; Huxley, “The Historical Geography,” pp. 88-89. See also note 18 above. The devotion of the “Sanasnaik” to the Psalms was not, however, a Paulician trait. See Peter of Sicily, *History*, chaps. 42, 96. Their identification as Paulicians on the basis of geography is not conclusive. See Tovma Artsruni, *Patmutiun Tann Artsruniats* [History of the House of the Artsrunis], ed. Kerovpe Patkanian (St. Petersburg: I.N. Skorokhodov, 1887), Book II, chap. 7 (pp. 120-21), trans. and comm. Robert W. Thomson, *Thomas Artsruni, History of the House of the Artsrunik* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1985), pp. 187-88.

²⁷ Hamilton and Hamilton, *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 57-58; Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. Charles de Boor (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1883; repr. Hildesheim and New York: Georg Olms, 1980), p. 429; Lemerle, “L’histoire,” pp. 78-79. Scholars have differed as to the exact date of the episode.

²⁸ Peter of Sicily, *History*, chaps. 176, 177, 179, 184, 185.



Tephrike and Greater Armenia

exception of three years in the 680s (possibly 695-88) under Symeon-Titus, the Paulician leadership, as identified to Peter of Sicily by his Paulician informants, was Armenian.²⁹ It was only in the reign of Empress Irene (797-802) that the leadership passed to Byzantines, successively Sergius-Tychicus, Carbeas, and Chrysocheir, the nephew and son-in-law of Carbeas.³⁰

Not all Paulicians everywhere, however, will have obediently followed their "official" leaders. Their status as a condemned and therefore partly underground group will indeed have encouraged internal cohesion, yet their very nature as dissenters will have predisposed them to disagree among themselves. They are unlikely to have had an effective and coercive surveillance system. Peter records that the Paulicians suffered internal disagreements, about doctrine as well as over leadership, and reveals that persecutions and the flight at various times of disciples from one place to another were certainly not absolute. Symeon-Titus and Justus, the adoptive son of Constantine-Silvanus, clashed over whether or not the creation of the physical world was the work of God. Paul's two sons, Gegnesius-Timothy and Theodore, each claimed that "he had received the divine grace of the spirit" entitling him to leadership. After Gegnesius-Timothy's death, there was a schism between the followers of his son Zacharias and those of Joseph-Epaphroditus, his adopted son. Zacharias' group was apparently slaughtered by the Arabs when they were trying to leave Mananalis, but it is unlikely that there was really such a tidy end to this schism. Sergius-Tychicus looms large in Peter's account and presumably in the memories and esteem of the Paulicians as someone who caused a major upheaval. He split the heresy into two, having "been disgusted by the evil-smelling filth" that the Armenian leader Baanes (Vahan) had taught, causing such enmity that, for a brief period after the death of Sergius-Tychicus, the Sergiots began to kill the Baniots.³¹

²⁹ Symeon-Titus, who as a Byzantine envoy had tried and condemned Constantine-Silvanus' followers in Colonia, subsequently converted himself.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, chaps. 103-11 (on Symeon); 112, 113, 123, 124, 130, 131 (on the Armenians, Paul, Gegnesius-Timothy, Joseph, Baanes); 132, 154, 184, 186 (on the Byzantines).

³¹ *Ibid.*, chaps. 110, 113, 124, 125, 170-73.

Paulician Doctrine

Paulician history was somewhat volatile, and there has been disagreement about whether the beliefs and practices of Paulicianism at Tephrike were, in their essentials, the same as those of seventh- and eighth-century Paulicians. At Tephrike, as described by Peter of Sicily, Paulicians were dualist, believing in two gods—one good, who had power only over the world to come, and one evil, who had created the material world. They were docetic in their Christology, blaspheming the Mother of God by maintaining that Jesus Christ had not really been Incarnate but had only appeared to be so. They rejected the following: a) the Eucharist—interpreting Christ’s words about His Body and Blood, spoken at the Last Supper, as allegorically referring to His teaching; b) “the image, power and operation” of the Cross, which they insulted; c) all the books of the Old Testament and the Epistles of St. Peter; d) the hierarchy of the Church; and e) baptism. They interpreted biblical passages that seemed to contradict their views in an allegorical fashion to justify themselves, and they were capable of the same approach when questioned as to their orthodoxy. When Gegnesius-Timothy was examined by the Patriarch of Constantinople, he accepted all the orthodox propositions put to him, interpreting them idiosyncratically, for example, meaning by the Mother of God the Heavenly Jerusalem. Although he says that Paulicians claimed that they were not licentious “like the Manichaeans,” Peter nevertheless hints at sexual immorality. Sergius-Tychicus’ proselytizing made many couples divorce “and fouled their beds with his disciples,” converted many monks and nuns into “strangers to God”; the leaders were of base descent, some “from Saracens, some from slaves, others were born from prostitution.”³² A more explicit charge is made in what seems to be an abridgement of the *History* by another Peter, monk and *Higoumenos*, but who was almost certainly the same person, alleging “all sorts of licentiousness and corruption; they sleep with both sexes. . . . They say that some of them abstain from their parents, and from them

³² *Ibid.*, chaps. 36, 38 (on dualism); 22, 39 (on docetism); 40-45, 120 (on Eucharist, Cross, canon, hierarchy, baptism); 13, 14, 115-20 (on allegory); 3, 136, 154, 155 (on immorality).

alone."³³

According to Peter of Sicily and his Paulician informants at Tephrike, their religion in 869 was, despite a history of internal disagreements, essentially the same as that of Constantine-Silvanus in Cibossa in the 650s.³⁴ Garsoïan, however, has argued that what Peter described was both a chronological and a geographical aberration; that its key features had developed in the ninth century, under its Byzantine leadership, in the region of Argaoun and Tephrike, and at the time when Tephrike was attracting a variety of people; and that Paulicianism in Armenia remained essentially very different, namely an Adoptionist sect "with an emphasis on the importance of baptism and a rejection of extreme asceticism" and on iconoclasm, for which reason it had been favored by the eighth-century Byzantine iconoclast emperors. No brief summary can do justice to the depth and scholarship of Garsoïan's detailed argument, but it rests on three major elements. One is the thesis that Paulicianism began much earlier than around 655. She takes the two disputed fifth- and sixth-century references to Paulicianism to be authentic, and Armenian references to "Messalianism" to signify Paulicianism, rather than the heresy of Messalianism, on the grounds that both a misspelling of the word Paulicianism which occurs and *Mtsghne*, the word for Messalianism, mean filthiness.³⁵ A second element is agreement with Conybeare about the Tondrakian text known as *The Key of Truth*, written in 1782 in Taron and discovered in 1837. Adoptionist in approach, it accepts the Eucharist and (adult) baptism while being anti-sacerdotal and hostile to religious images. Conybeare regarded this text as an authentic manual not only of the medieval Tondrakian heretics, first men-

³³ Peter the Higoümenos, *Abridgement*, English trans. in Hamilton and Hamilton, *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 92-96, and French trans. with Greek text in Astruc et al., "Les sources grecques," pp. 80-92 (for the allegation, see chap. 24). For the two Peters being one, and their accounts antedating the version of the Patriarch Photius (858-67, 877-86 A.D.), see Hamilton and Hamilton, *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 6, 92, and Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 26-40, 31-47.

³⁴ The Paulicians at Tephrike recognized Constantine-Silvanus as their first teacher and his church as one of the six in their confession. See Peter the Higoümenos, *Abridgement*, chaps. 3, 6, 7.

³⁵ Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy*, pp. 80-95, 122-25, 182-85, 188, 202, 207-10, 232, 234-38.

tioned in tenth-century Armenian texts, but also of the earlier Paulicians. This identification is based not only on the continuity of the name Tondrakian but also on the apparent identification of Paulicianism and Tondrakianism as the same by the eleventh-century Armenian Grigor Magistros (Gregory Magister). Acceptance and combination of all these views means that the Paulician doctrine may be traced back to the third-century (Adoptionist) Paul of Samosata.³⁶ The third and least crucial element of Garsoïan's argument is her conclusion that Peter of Sicily's *History* is a complex, multilayered document, compiled after 932, and that the author's assertions about his visit to Tephrike (869-70) are false.³⁷

The views of Nina Garsoïan have by and large not been accepted. Other scholars have emphasized the significant differences between the eighteenth-century and the medieval Tondrakians, as portrayed in medieval Armenian sources, and have suggested how and why the views of *The Key of Truth* might have come into vogue among dissenters in the later period.³⁸ Lemerle's magisterial and meticulous analysis of the Greek sources and of modern scholarship has left intact the claim of Peter's *History* to be the work of a visitor to Tephrike, embodying information from Paulician informants.³⁹ Garsoïan's arguments about the disputed references to the Paulicians and those to the Messalians have not proved conclusive.

The Testimony of John III

Scholars who have rejected Garsoïan's thesis about Paulician doctrine and approached the question from Byzantine or Christian heresy studies have failed to make significant use of John of Odzun's *Against the Paulicians*. This neglect apparently is not the result of any doubt about the authenticity of the treatise's date and authorship. No such doubts are expressed by Garsoïan,

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 25, 96, 108-11, 139-40, 151-67, 210-20; Conybeare, *The Key of Truth*, pp. vi, viii-ix, and Introduction, esp. pp. xxiv, xxix-xxxi, xxxiii-xl, lxxxv-lxxxvi, cv-cviii, cxv, 71, 74-77, 86, 115, 117-21, 123-24.

³⁷ Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy*, pp. 35-79.

³⁸ Hamilton and Hamilton, *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 295-97.

³⁹ Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 12-15, 17-31, 47.

by scholars who dismiss John's information as unhelpful, by those who draw on it for Paulician history,⁴⁰ or by those who use it in connection with other questions, as, for example, James Russell has done regarding the heresy, attested later, of the *Arevordik* (Children of the Sun), an offshoot or remnant of Zoroastrianism.⁴¹ It is the text's usefulness regarding Paulician doctrine that is questioned. And it is easy to see why, if we consider, instead of selected extracts alone, a précis of the whole text, which is about 3,000 words.

John says there is a danger that the simple and artless will be entrapped by people "who have ascended from evils to evils; from war against images to war against the Cross and to detestation of Christ and thence to atheism and the worship of demons," and have become "confederates of the circumcised tyrants." Using the words of the holy prophets, these people insult the orthodox with the accusation of idolatry because of "worship of the Cross" and "representation, in painting, of the incarnation of the Word of God." (This section comprises 44 lines.) Orthodox behavior, however, differs from heathen idolatry. John briefly explains how there have been different heathen cults and how they originated—for example, that of the crocodile among the Egyptians because of its frightening strength and behavior, and of cat-worship (which in passing he attributes to the Paulicians) because of the role of cats in destroying animals which spoil food. (This disquisition includes references to Ormezd and Aramazd, Armenian names for the supreme deity of Zoroastrianism.)⁴² The devil took up residence in heathen idols and received there the worship of the heathens, so that they were "not only heathen worshippers of demons but also worshippers of the devil." (This section comprises 77 lines.) There is no point, John continues, in calling them (meaning the Paulicians, although he does not use the name in this passage) by any name other than idolaters. "They worship the Sun, cohabit with sun-worshippers, worship cats . . . in the darkness they perform dark ignominies . . . [and engage in] Persian copulation with their

⁴⁰ For example, Conybeare, *The Key of Truth*, pp. lvii-lix; Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee*, pp. 33-34, 37, 47, 59, 62, 176.

⁴¹ Russell, *Zoroastrianism*, pp. 515-39.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 153.

mothers.” They supplicate idols of Chamos (the abomination of Moab according to I Kings 11.7) and Astarte; “with Janes and Jambres” (who withstood Moses, according to II Timothy 3.8) they worship the demon on Mount Olympos (that is, they worship the Devil). They mix “flour with the blood of children” (to make bread for communion) and eat it. They put their corpses on rooftops. “They swear ‘the one on high knows’. When they wish to beseech the sun they say ‘little sun, little light’,” and they call upon demons, according to the errors of Mani and Simon Magus. They take a first-born son, throw him from hand to hand to each other and honor the one in whose hand it dies, establishing him in the honor of the sect. “They swear oaths ‘by the sole-begotten Son’ or ‘the glory of that one to whose hands the sole-begotten son consigned his spirit’.” (This section comprises 36 lines.)⁴³ They “try to attract the ignorant of the faithful to themselves,” “they are shameless among each other” but think to “hide from us” with deceitful words. They were “admonished” by Catholicos Nerses, but not brought to reason; “after his death . . . they hid somewhere on the borders” where they were joined, because they were “alike,” by iconoclasts, who had been “rebuked by the Catholicoi of the Albanians.” Believing that they had discovered something new, they came out into the open. They are established at Tsrka. They dare “to attach their own name” to the orthodox and call them “idolatrous.” (This section comprises 29 lines.)

John then returns, with biblical references and historical allusions, to the defense of Christian veneration of “churches, altars, crosses and images.” Churches, where God and angels are, differ greatly from temples of idols. Unlike the demons who require sacrifices, God asks us to be just, and good and peaceful, but whatever “has been ordered by God to be lovely to us” is “hateful to them” (the Paulicians) “by order of the demons, and whatever is to be rejected by us is honored by them.” God himself “made matter, to serve him,” and “empowered” it, and himself “took the form of a slave, . . . the likeness of men” and “taught us to adore the painted image, in human form, of the incarnation of the word of God” and the “sign of victory” (the

⁴³ Ibid., p. 538, for translation of these lines, omitting the bloody communion and child murder.

Cross). Worship of such things is of what is “invisible” and “treasured up” within the visible object. In addition, these things have been consecrated, by priests, with holy oil; “the instruments of salvation; churches, altars, crosses, images” have been so consecrated, and so are distinct from every substance, and they accomplish miracles. Miracles like the overturning of the walls of Jericho by the Tabernacle were not done by such things themselves but because God was “incorporated in” them. In both “ancient and present times, it was the will of God to be in inanimate matter.” The heretics might use this proposition to say that “because God is everywhere therefore every substance is to be worshiped,” but this is not so, God has indicated which things are appropriate. “To honor Christ’s Cross and his image is to honor Christ. To insult them is to sin as one who insults Christ.” (This section comprises 229 lines.) We must be separate from these filthy ones (the Paulicians) who accuse us of idolatry. (12 lines.) In the final forty lines of the text, John seems to prepare the way for a further treatise that would focus on Christology and related questions.

Given the nature and content of *Against the Paulicians*, it is understandable that Garsoïan believes that iconoclasm was an essential ingredient of the Paulicianism condemned by John and that this Paulicianism was very different from what is described by Peter of Sicily.⁴⁴ Iconoclasm is a strong element in the heretics’ history and in their criticism of the orthodox, and John’s prime concern seems to be defense of images. Garsoïan’s belief that it is difficult to reconcile the Armenian and Greek sources is widely shared.⁴⁵ Some scholars implicitly agree with Garsoïan’s response regarding iconoclasm, but, like Milan Loos, have decided, not that the Paulicians were iconoclasts, but that the heretics about whom John was writing were iconoclasts rather than Paulicians.⁴⁶ Some scholars judge that John offers us little of significance.⁴⁷

The conclusion of Steven Runciman that John knew little

⁴⁴ Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy*, pp. 80, 151, 183-85, 197-204, 206-07, 231-32.

⁴⁵ See, for example, Lemerle, “L’histoire,” p. 54.

⁴⁶ Milan Loos, “Où en est la question du mouvement paulicien?” *Académie bulgare des Sciences: Bulletin de la Section d’Histoire* 14-15 (1964): 357-71, esp. 362.

⁴⁷ Lemerle, “L’histoire,” pp. 13-14.

about the Paulicians is also reasonable.⁴⁸ John, after all, offers us no identification of his sources; no allusion, for example, to any trial or examination of Paulicians, to any observation of or visit to them, to any correspondence with them or with others who had knowledge about them. The nearest such identifications are his implicit allusion to the records of the catholicosate and his angry references to the criticism that the heretics directed at the orthodox. These references certainly suggest that reports of recent dialogues, or confrontations, involving suspect people or ideas had reached him, but they do not indicate the levels, frequency, whereabouts, or times of such conversations.⁴⁹ The condemnation of Paulicians at the 719 Council of Dvin and in John's tract would suggest that he thought that these contacts were dangerous rather than rare and trivial.⁵⁰ But his treatment of Paulicianism is no more than one quarter of the treatise, which is essentially a defense of orthodoxy containing observations about heathen polytheism and idolatry; and his discussion is scarcely a systematic or sustained account or argument.

Certain of the accusations which John makes about the heretics have struck some scholars, for example, Conybeare,⁵¹ as being not only distasteful but also nonsensical and merely stereotypical, traditional, and inaccurate allegations.⁵² After all, earlier minorities had suffered similar charges. Christians in general had been charged by pagan critics in the second century with ritual murder of children, cannibalism, and sexual orgies, the latter in darkness. One account alleges that after much feasting, a dog previously tied to the chandelier is provoked to rush and spring and overturn the light for the debauchery to begin. The Christian heretic Montanists were accused in the fourth and fifth centuries of using the blood of a child (which might or might not survive the experience) for the bread of their offering.⁵³ Similar accusa-

⁴⁸ Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee*, p. 33.

⁴⁹ John of Odzun, *Against the Paulicians*, pp. 78-81, 86-91, 102-03.

⁵⁰ See note 69 below for Peter of Sicily's sense that conversation with Paulicians should be avoided by "the simple."

⁵¹ Conybeare, *The Key of Truth*, p. lix.

⁵² Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy*, p. 95, concedes that John's text contains "old wives' tales of the sectarians' practices," though she adds that even here some of his information may be more accurate than has been generally credited.

⁵³ Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons* (London: Sussex University Press and

tions of John III against the Paulicians may seem as if they should be disregarded. According to Norman Cohn, John "brought the two originally independent fantasies of the erotic orgy and the 'Thyestean feast' into logical relationships," making the blood used in communion the product of the murder of the infant which was the product of incest. Such allegations reveal only, Cohn thinks, that the accused were hated and suspected, pigeon-holed with earlier deviants, slander about whom was available in libraries.⁵⁴

Yet, John's testimony should be examined carefully. There are almost no other informative references to this Armenian heresy in Armenian sources. The questionable reference in the 555 Oath of Union merely implies that the Paulicians accepted "communion" involving "bread of offering." The others, authentic or not, are merely allusions or, in the *Catalogue of Heresies*, obviously semi-legendary. There are no more until the late tenth century, when allusions to Paulicianism recur.⁵⁵ Scholars have accepted John's testimony about Paulician history (as distinct from belief) despite disagreeing about the dates of what he records, and John is unambiguous in attributing to one and the same group the history, doctrine, and criticism of the orthodox to which he alludes.⁵⁶

Furthermore, John ought to be a useful witness. First, the years before and during his catholicosate were particularly important in Paulician history. It is likely that it was during the leadership of Paul (father of Gegnesius-Timothy, circa 688-718) that Paulicianism was established or strengthened in southwestern Armenia. Paul himself may have saved Paulicianism from extinction, and, though apparently not recognized by the Paulicians as one of their supreme teachers, he seems to have established a dynastic right of leadership and inadvertently been the cause of the orthodox calling it Paulicianism.⁵⁷ Second, Paul's successor Gegnesius-Timothy (circa 718-48) was denounced to Byzantine

Heinemann, 1975), pp. 1-17; Stephen Benko, *Pagan Rome and the Early Christians* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1984), pp. 24, 54-74.

⁵⁴ Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, p. 18; Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy*, pp. 95n46, 103n84, 167n95.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 87, 88-89, 92-97, 102-04, 236-37.

⁵⁶ See notes 4, 47 above.

⁵⁷ See note 17 above.

Emperor Leo III (717-41) for heresy and consequently questioned in Constantinople. There is unfortunately no evidence for the date of Gegnesius-Timothy's tribulations and therefore their relationship to the condemnation of Paulicians in Armenia. Some scholars date them to the beginning of Leo's reign; others believe a more likely date is after 726, when Leo enacted penalties against heretics, or even after his Iconoclast decree in 730.⁵⁸ If the latter date is correct, Leo's interest may have been prompted by John's, but if the former date (early in Leo's reign), John's interest may have been prompted by the emperor's actions. Third, despite the fact that Armenian-Byzantine Church union was ended by John in 726, Leo himself had a number of Armenian contacts and a favorable image in Armenia. He had Armenians in his suite on a mission to the Alans for Justinian II.⁵⁹ It is likely that his consul and attendant David was involved, with Stepanos Siunetsi (Stephen of Siunik), in the Armenian translation of works by Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite.⁶⁰

Leo's image in later Armenian historical works, for example the eighth-century *History* by Ghevond, is very different from that in Byzantine ones, which stigmatize Leo because of his iconoclasm. This complimentary image of a new Moses, who by the power of the Cross caused the infidel (Arab) besiegers of Constantinople to drown, was presumably propagated by a pro-Byzantine faction in Armenia, which was drawing on Leo's own propaganda.⁶¹ An embassy sent by Leo to John to protest against

⁵⁸ Peter of Sicily, *History*, chaps. 114-21. Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 76-77, favors after 730. Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy*, pp. 66, 118, 123, 175-77, 188, does not commit herself. Leslie Barnard, "The Paulicians and Iconoclasm," in Anthony Bryer and Judith Herrin, eds., *Iconoclasm* (Birmingham: University of Birmingham Centre for Byzantine Studies, 1977), p. 76, has "the beginning" of Leo's reign without giving reasons.

⁵⁹ Marius Canard, "L'aventure caucasienne du spathaire Léon, le futur empereur Léon III," *Revue des études arméniennes*, n.s., 8 (1971): 353-57.

⁶⁰ Stephen Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm during the Reign of Leo III with Particular Attention to the Oriental Sources* (Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus SCO, 1973), pp. 147-48.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. xvii, 36-39, 132-42. Gero believes the extant version of Ghevond's text dates from the eleventh century, but his suggestion has not been generally accepted. See also Jean-Pierre Mahé, "Le problème de l'authenticité et de la valeur de la chronique de Lewond," in *L'Arménie et Byzance: Histoire et Culture* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1996), pp. 119-26.

the expulsion of the "Greek [rite]" is recorded by the thirteenth-century historian Vardan Areveltsi.⁶² A near contemporary, Stepanos Orbelian, asserts that Stepanos Siunetsi visited Constantinople, was denounced to Leo as a heretic by a dyophysite Armenian, but mollified the emperor and impressed Patriarch Germanus.⁶³

Given this context of contacts, it is likely that the Armenian and Byzantine authorities exchanged information about Paulicianism and hence that Catholicos John had some awareness of what had been discovered, or alleged, during the two episodes in the 680s of Byzantine persecution of the Paulicians in Colonia. Finally, one should not dismiss contemporary allegations as stereotypical abuse without careful examination. In the view of Stephen Benko, pagan charges against early Christians were not entirely based on misunderstandings (for example, of the Eucharist, that is, the eating and drinking of the Body and Blood of the Son of God in the form of bread and wine), charges of occasional immoral behavior were accurate, and cannibalism did occur among some fringe groups.⁶⁴ Russell regards John's accusation of Persian incest as indicating "Paulician" retention of the Zoroastrian practice of close-kin marriage. Their exposure of the dead and sun-worship were other Zoroastrian traits.⁶⁵

The Compatibility of John III's Testimony with That of Peter of Sicily

Catholicos John's account of Paulicianism is certainly not the same as that of Peter of Sicily, but the two are not fundamentally conflicting. They are as readily reconcilable with regard to the essentials of Paulician doctrine as they are with regard to

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 141-42. For a translation of Vardan's report, see Robert W. Thomson, "The Historical Compilation of Vardan Areveltsi," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 43 (1989): 180.

⁶³ Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm*, pp. 143-47; Stepan Orbelian, *Patmutiun Tann Sisakan* [History of the House of Sisakan], ed. Mkrtych Emin (Moscow: Lazarian Institute of Oriental Languages, 1861), pp. 97-98, and, for a French translation, Marie Félicité Brosset, *Histoire de la Siounie par Stéphannos Orbélian*, 2 vols. (St. Petersburg: Académie impériale des sciences, 1864, 1866), vol. 1, pp. 82-83.

⁶⁴ Benko, *Pagan Rome*, pp. 60-74, 163.

⁶⁵ Russell, *Zoroastrianism*, pp. 515, 520, 522-24.

Paulician history.⁶⁶ Their apparent inconsistencies actually arise from the difference of emphasis and of purpose of the respective authors. Peter proposed “a systematic account of the foul heresy,” based on what he had “diligently found out,” namely, from Paulician as well as orthodox sources.⁶⁷ John’s concern, stimulated by Paulician attempts at recruitment, to which he explicitly refers, was to fortify the orthodox so that they should be neither unsettled nor drawn into heresy by Paulician criticism. His engagement throughout his text is with his flock rather than with the deviants, though alluding to their criticism, and he explains that he has written at such length in order to dumbfound these people who try to corrupt “our understanding.” John’s defense of orthodoxy uses the Old Testament a great deal. This and the allegation that the heretics quote the holy prophets in their accusations of idolatry might imply that the Paulicians did, too.⁶⁸ Such usage seems at variance with the principles of Peter of Sicily’s Paulicians, who rejected the Old Testament, but it is not necessarily so: an eleventh-century Byzantine writer says of the Bogomils that they have learned from the Paulicians to reject the books of Moses and what follows them but will use them “to support their positions.”⁶⁹ The cause for John’s focus on images is that the Paulicians had chosen to charge the church with idolatry to launch their recruitment drive. It is entirely plausible that heretics would elect to begin with something that offered the prospect of common grounds of concern between themselves and their interlocutors and with a lesser rather than a greater idiosyncrasy of their belief. It is also consistent with other accounts. Peter of Sicily recommended that “ordinary” people avoid talking to the Paulicians, for it “is difficult for the simple not to be swept away by them . . . their craft is only recognized by those who are very familiar with holy scripture.”⁷⁰ Sergius-Tychicus, according to Peter of Sicily, was drawn in by a woman who

⁶⁶ There does exist some consensus to the contrary. See notes 44-45 above.

⁶⁷ Peter of Sicily, *History*, chaps. 2, 5, 6. See note 8 above for his sources.

⁶⁸ John of Odzun, *Against the Paulicians*, pp. 86, 87 (on recruitment); pp. 102, 103 (on purpose); pp. 80, 81 (on accusations). The editor’s footnotes identify forty-one biblical allusions, twenty-nine of them to the Old Testament.

⁶⁹ Peter of Sicily, *History*, chap. 42; Euthymius Zigabenus, *Dogmatic Panoply*, chap. 1, translated in Hamilton and Hamilton, *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 182.

⁷⁰ Peter of Sicily, *History*, chaps. 10-12.

began by asking simply why he did not read the Gospels, before she went through them, "twisting the sense." "For until the heretics have led wretches to complete destruction, they do not reveal to them their great mystery, which is the denial of God," by which Peter probably means their views of Creation, or perhaps of Christ.⁷¹

John explicitly states that the Paulicians were more, and worse, than iconoclasts. On some points, most importantly regarding the Cross, they seem to have been diametrically opposed to eighth-century Byzantine iconoclasts to the extent that it is hard to credit that the iconoclast emperors would knowingly have favored them. Peter Brown has shown that the Byzantine icon debate was concerned with whether icons were holy, like the only three material objects of whose holiness the iconoclasts were convinced: church buildings, the Eucharist (which iconoclasts revered, regarding it as the only true image of Christ), and the sign of the Cross, whose cult was promoted by the iconoclast emperors Leo III and Constantine V (741-75). The Cross was honored by the iconoclasts, as attested in early seventh-century Armenia.⁷² According to John, however, the Paulicians had ascended "from war against images to war against the Cross," and he alludes indignantly to their criticism of its veneration.⁷³ Their apparent practice of a dreadful parody of the Eucharist, echoed in an allegation in the much later *Catalogue of Heresies*, No. 153, titled "The Bloodthirsty," that their leader recommended they shed and drink blood, and herself slaughtered children, may owe more to John's erudition than to Paulician behavior,⁷⁴ but at the least it suggests that John believed that they rejected the orthodox communion. Furthermore, as John's concern was to fortify the orthodox against Paulician criticism, it is legitimate to see not only what he alleges but also what he

⁷¹ Ibid., chaps. 135, 138-47, 151.

⁷² Peter R.L. Brown, "A Dark-Age Crisis: Aspects of the Iconoclastic Controversy," *English Historical Review* 88 (1973): 1-34, esp. 5-6; Stephen Gero, "The Eucharistic Doctrine of the Byzantine Iconoclasts and Its Sources," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 68 (1975): 4-22; John Moorhead, "Iconoclasm, the Cross and the Imperial Image," *Byzantion* 55 (1985): 165-79; Sirarpie Der Nersessian, "Une apologie des images du septième siècle," *Byzantion* 17 (1944-45): 58-87, esp. 73-74.

⁷³ John of Odzun, *Against the Paulicians*, pp. 78-81, 86-87.

⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 86-87; Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy*, pp. 112, 103n84, 167n95.

defends as throwing some light on heretic opinions. His stress on church buildings, altars, and holy oil, especially in the consecration, by priests, of material objects, as well as on the Cross and images as instruments of salvation, might suggest that he felt that the Paulicians questioned the efficacy of these things, too.⁷⁵ Any such suspicion is compatible with Peter of Sicily's charge that the Paulicians rejected the hierarchy of the orthodox Church.

Third, John's other serious allegations are compatible with those of Peter. The charge of child murder serves in John's text to explain that the heretics can swear orthodox sounding oaths while meaning something entirely different from the orthodox interpretation. This is the sort of dissembling involved in the heretics' allegorical interpretation of biblical passages that counter their heresy, as related by Peter, and in the deceptive answers of their leader Gegnesius-Timothy, while being examined in Constantinople.⁷⁶ John's heretics abhor what the orthodox love, as Peter's do, and honor what the orthodox reject.⁷⁷ The latter category could include such things as sexual relations with partners in categories forbidden by orthodoxy, approbation of the heretic leaders, and veneration of the villains of the Old Testament. As dualist sects took the Creator God in the Bible to be the Devil, they tended to see His opponents in it as good.⁷⁸

Some other of John's charges may likewise be tentatively interpreted as reflecting Paulician dualism, perhaps without John himself having fully realized it. "Atheism" may be the same as Peter's "denial of God" and may refer to their views of Creation.⁷⁹ So, too, may the accusation of demon worship. The allegation that they call on demons according to the errors of Mani and Simon the Magician is not very clear, but when Peter of Sicily accused the Paulicians of Manichaeism he meant that they were dualist in their view of creation, and it is not impossible that John meant the same.⁸⁰ John certainly stresses some

⁷⁵ John of Odzun, *Against the Paulicians*, pp. 96-99.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 86-87. Peter of Sicily, *History*, chaps. 115-21.

⁷⁷ John of Odzun, *Against the Paulicians*, pp. 92-95.

⁷⁸ Cf. Peter of Sicily, *History*, chap. 42.

⁷⁹ Peter of Sicily, *History*, in chap. 113, labels Paulicianism as atheism.

⁸⁰ John of Odzun, *Against the Paulicians*, pp. 86, 87; Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy*, pp. 98n61, 167n95, 203. The charge of Manichaeism has been variously interpreted by scholars, as a non-specific abusive term, as meaning dualism or

points to the orthodox which concern created matter and which Peter's Paulicians would have contradicted: that God made man and matter which He has inhabited and through which He has performed miracles, like those of the Old Testament.⁸¹ It would not be surprising if the dualism of John's heretics was more muted than Peter's, for in the 680s Justus, adoptive son of Paulician founder Constantine-Silvanus, and Symeon-Titus, its second leader-teacher, had quarreled over creation, Justus suspecting that orthodoxy was correct, and Symeon-Titus dissenting. This quarrel had led to Emperor Justinian II burning of all "who persisted in error" and the flight of Paul and his sons back to Armenia.⁸² It is likely that Justus had supporters and that some of them accompanied Paul, who may even have owed his escape of the "great pyre" partly to willingness to feign, or even to consider, acceptance of the orthodox position. The orthodox tendency did not necessarily die or remain confined in Colonia.

In view of the shifts and heterogeneity of Paulician doctrine, as described by Peter of Sicily, and the overriding concern of John of Odzun to neutralize Paulician criticism of orthodoxy, their two accounts may be regarded as reconcilable concerning the essentials of Paulician doctrine, except in four respects. Apart from the hint of sexual immorality, Peter's charges do not suggest that the Paulicians had any particularly Zoroastrian traits, whereas those of John do. Second, the cat-worship of John's Paulicians seems to have been an idiosyncrasy; it is not paralleled in Peter's text, and it is contrary to Zoroastrian categorization of cats as noxious creatures.⁸³ Third, John's text is singularly uninformative about the Christology of his heretics. Neither the

Gnosticism or, as by Garsoïan, iconoclasm.

⁸¹ Der Nersessian, "Image Worship," pp. 71-72, notes that John did not discuss matter as extensively as did Vrtanes Kertogh in his tract against the early seventh-century Armenian iconoclasts. Catholicos John adds the consecration of crosses and images to defense of orthodox practice, forbidding, in his Canons, the worship of any cross that has not been blessed and anointed by a priest. Whereas Vrtanes enumerated different subjects represented, the only image John mentions specifically is that of Christ. The fact that John thought it appropriate to concentrate on Christ may suggest a perception on his part that Paulician doctrine regarding Christ was unorthodox.

⁸² Peter of Sicily, *History*, chaps. 110-12.

⁸³ Russell, *Zoroastrianism*, pp. 460, 538; John of Odzun, *Against the Paulicians*, pp. 82-85.

cause of their "detestation of Christ" nor what it comprised is stated. John may mean simply what he says later, that to insult the Cross and the image of Christ is to insult Christ, or he may be hinting at some undisclosed or unknown to him Christological error.⁸⁴ Fourth, John's "smears" about Paulician communion and the role of child murder in the election of the leaders are not echoed by Peter.

If Peter's account is to be taken as complete, therefore, Paulicianism outside Armenia seems to have lost, under its ninth-century Greek leaders, some elements that had been derived from the pre-Christian, Zoroastrian background of its Armenian founders. These elements may even have contributed to the disagreements between Baanes and Sergius-Tychicus. Otherwise, Paulicianism seems to have retained a continuity of belief since the second half of the seventh century.

The Attractiveness of Paulicianism

Paulicianism outside Armenia combined its doctrinal conservatism with a continued attractiveness to converts, for which various explanations have been offered. Because Paulicianism viewed the material world as evil and rejected the established Church with all its institutions and trappings, it has often been seen as an anti-establishment phenomenon, though the thesis that it was a proletarian, anti-feudal movement has been convincingly refuted by Garsoïan (albeit with recourse to evidence pertaining to Tondrakianism).⁸⁵ It may also have derived its strength in part from a hunger for an explanation of shocking occurrences: in the seventh century, the complete and permanent Arab Muslim conquest of the Sasanian Empire (a society with whose culture Armenian culture had had much in common and with which it had for more than three centuries kept in close touch despite religious difference) and of Christian (Byzantine) territory south of Armenia; and in the eighth century, the economic decline, political repression, and religious persecution in Armenia under

⁸⁴ John of Odzun, *Against the Paulicians*, pp. 78-81, 102, 103. See also note 80 above.

⁸⁵ Nina G. Garsoïan, "Byzantine Heresy: A Re-interpretation," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 25 (1971): 87-113.

Arab rule. The doctrine that this world belongs to an evil god explains the problems of evil and the triumph of the ungodly over Christians.

Such a response was, of course, very different from that of the orthodox. Throughout early medieval Christendom, including Armenia, churchmen and rulers developed in and for their societies an Old Testament self-image that they articulated in various ways. Their image of a new people of Israel, a chosen people special to God but beset by enemies, offered a boost to morale and an explanation of their problems, whether raiding Vikings in the western, Carolingian Empire, or conquering Bulgars and Arabs in the Byzantine Empire. This explanation tended to be that God was punishing His people for laxity or for sin of some sort. Thus, the Byzantine emperors Leo III and Constantine V felt that abolition of icon worship, which they prosecuted vigorously, would help in their military endeavors against Arabs and Bulgars. Rulers looked to the Old Testament for a model and guide for their own behavior and for society, and not only with regard to religious matters; it had political, legal, and social implications, too.⁸⁶ Consequently, the Paulicians' refusal to accept the authority of the Old Testament was not simply an intellectual issue. It amounted to a fundamental rejection of what might be considered one of the most striking elements of early medieval Christian social cohesion. The same might also be said of Paulician rejection of the Cross. The Cross was indeed "the sign of victory," not only over death but also of the established social and political order. In Byzantium it adorned coins which were associated with the emperors who promoted its cult and whose battle standard was a gilded cross containing a relic of the True Cross.⁸⁷ Catholicos John's allegations of incest, murder, and cannibalism ought not to be interpreted, as for example Cohn believes, simply as an attempt to

⁸⁶ Brown, "A Dark-Age Crisis," pp. 23-34; John M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic Kingship in England and on the Continent* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. 47-151. Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm*, p. 57, remarks on Leo III: "The author [of Leo's law code] saw himself as a new Moses . . . a second Solomon." See also note 77 above.

⁸⁷ Moorhead, "Iconoclasm"; Michael McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium and the Early Medieval West* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 247, 308, 358.

indicate a perception of the accused as denying the values by which society lived, for he surely thought that his revelation of their rejection of the Cross was quite sufficient to do this.⁸⁸

Whereas the eighth century had posed challenging questions of historical causation, the ninth did not. In the ninth century, the Arab caliphate declined, Byzantium grew stronger, and Armenia became increasingly prosperous and independent, its kingship restored with the coronation of Ashot I Bagratuni in 884/85. These events might well have seemed a vindication of the established order. This may explain why Paulicianism declined after the death of Sergius-Tychicus (834/35). Despite splitting the sect, Sergius-Tychicus had also greatly extended it, and his disciples, the *Astatoi*, had acquired Argaoun from the emir of Melitene, whence in alliance with their benefactor they had raided Byzantium, taking captives and trading in slaves.⁸⁹ For the period after Sergius-Tychicus' death, Peter of Sicily is less informative and one must depend much more on tenth-century sources. The Paulicians were apparently very numerous in the 840s. Many were destroyed by Byzantine persecution, but in 843-44 some 5,000 fled with Carbeas to Melitene, whence they founded Argaoun, Amara (about 90 miles northwest of Melitene), and, after many others joined them, Tephrike. Under the capable military leadership of Carbeas and Chrysocheir, they raided destructively and profitably. Chrysocheir reached as far as Nicomedia and Nicea, infamously stabled his horses in the Church of John the Theologian, and suggested that Byzantium be partitioned between himself and the emperor, Basil I. Chrysocheir was so difficult to deal with that Basil had to resort to prayer to defeat him.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, pp. 14-15, 17-18.

⁸⁹ Peter of Sicily, *History*, chaps. 153-57, 163, 172, 177-79.

⁹⁰ Theophanes Continuatus, *Chronographia*, ed. Immanuel Bekker (*Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae*) (Bonn: Weber, 1838), Book IV, sections 16, 23 (pp. 165-67, 176-77), Book V, sections 37, 40, 41, 43 (pp. 266-67, 270, 272, 276); Genesis, *Regum*, ed. Carl Lachmann (*Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae*) (Bonn: Weber, 1834), Book IV, pp. 120-22; Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy*, pp. 125-29; Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 88-103; Hamilton and Hamilton, *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 21-22. Theophanes Continuatus' version of the date and circumstances of the foundation of Argaoun differs from that of Peter of Sicily. Lemerle (pp. 89-90) suggests that Carbeas merely joined Paulicians already established there.

The State of Tephrike

The tenth-century Byzantine chronicles seem to present Tephrike and its dependencies as a Paulician state of significance and power. But these sources date from the time of Emperor Basil's grandson, Constantine VII (911-59), who had an interest in Basil's good reputation. One of them, the *Life of Basil* (Book V of the continuation of Theophanes' *Chronographia*) is Constantine's own work. Their picture, which serves to flatter Basil, given that he brought Tephrike to an end, may be exaggerated. It is interesting that it is not corroborated by Basil's own envoy, Peter of Sicily. Peter's account of Carbeas is brief: that he founded Tephrike, having increased Paulician numbers and to escape the domination of the emir of Melitene, that he sold as slaves those who did not obey him, and that he pillaged Byzantium.

Chrysocheir receives even scantier treatment. Peter tells us nothing of what had necessitated his own visit to Tephrike, apparently to arrange an exchange of prisoners. His coverage thus suggests that in his eyes the threat represented by the Paulicians was, given their intention of sending missionaries there, to orthodoxy in Bulgaria rather than to the power of the Byzantine state.⁹¹ References in Arab sources may likewise hint that the importance of Tephrike has been exaggerated. Carbeas appears primarily as a raider (he captured 5,000 animals in 860), and when Byzantine forces pillaged the region of Tephrike in 856, he did not attempt to resist. Chrysocheir was killed at the head of a troop of his companions, without its being suggested that he had a large and powerful army.⁹² The Paulicians of Tephrike most probably owed their political and military power to their Arab allies. Tephrike cannot have been economically self-sufficient. Rather, it depended on pillage, ransoms of prisoners, and the slave trade. The barrenness of the area facilitated survival in that it made it difficult for Byzantium to sustain a siege, but it can hardly have engendered prosperity.⁹³

Paulician territory in 870 thus scarcely constituted a state in

⁹¹ Lemerle, "L'histoire," p. 98; Peter of Sicily, *History*, chaps. 4, 5, 184-87.

⁹² Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 90-91, 102.

⁹³ Theophanes Continuatus, Book V, section 37 (p. 267).

either political or economic respects, despite some present-day historians according it that status.⁹⁴ It is also likely that its Paulician character was declining. Sergius-Tychicus, as reported by Peter of Sicily, claimed to disapprove of Argaoun's raiding and slaving. If Sergius-Tychicus is to be believed, political, military, and economic ambition motivated its inhabitants, whom he could not control. After his death, the Paulicians had a number of equal teachers rather than, as they had always done before, one superior teacher.⁹⁵ Carbeas, their secular leader, appears more of an adventurer than a sincere non-conformist. According to his contemporary, Patriarch Photius, in his own version of Peter's account, Carbeas was not sincerely attached to any faith and had even feigned Islam.⁹⁶ Given the intimacy of Tephrike with Melitene, despite Carbeas' wish for independence, it is probable that there were usually some Muslims there. Argaoun, Amara, and Tephrike were at least once the bases from which contingents from Melitene and Tarsus set out with Carbeas to lay waste to Byzantine lands.⁹⁷ There were even some orthodox Christians in Tephrike. Peter had talked with them. Some must have been captives, but others free, for his *Abridgement* alleges that some Paulicians would come secretly into orthodox churches to take communion and have their children baptized by captive orthodox priests and that some used the Cross to cure their illnesses (though they reverted to insulting it again when healthy). Peter interpreted such behavior as craft to deceive the simple, but it could well have been expressive of genuine orthodoxy coupled with fear of discovery by the heretic authorities. Tephrike's population must have been heterogeneous. As described by Peter, it comprised its Paulician founders, religious refugees from Byzantium, and people from the nearby frontier regions.⁹⁸ Their senses of identity, or residual political or social allegiance, must have varied. After Tephrike fell, they scattered.

⁹⁴ See, for example, Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 95-96; Hamilton and Hamilton, *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 22.

⁹⁵ Peter of Sicily, *History*, chaps. 157, 183.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, chap. 44. For Greek text and French translation of this work, see Astruc et al., "Les sources grecques," pp. 120-73.

⁹⁷ Theophanes Continuatus, Book IV, section 16 (p. 166).

⁹⁸ Peter of Sicily, *History*, chaps. 5, 184, 185; Peter the Higoumenos, *Abridgement*, chaps. 22-24.

Conclusion

It seems probable that the faith of the ninth-century Paulicians in the region of Lesser Armenia was fundamentally the same as that of their predecessors in Greater Armenia and in Byzantium in the seventh and eighth centuries and that their beliefs had been attractive as an explanation of the recent past and of the present. In the ninth century, there followed successively the revival of Byzantine and Armenian fortunes vis-à-vis the Arabs, the end of Armenian leadership of the Paulician sect, and the sect's decline. The first of these three developments may have contributed to the second, and both to the third. The apogee of Paulicianism should be dated to the first half rather than the second half of the ninth century, in the time of the Byzantine leader-teacher Sergius-Tychicus and his opponent and rival the Armenian Baanes rather than of the Byzantine secular leaders Carbeas and Chrysocheir. Paulicianism and the Paulician community were probably seriously weakened by the Byzantine persecution of the 840s. It is likely that the Armenian Paulician element was not the majority in Tephrike, which was strong by virtue of its site and of its enjoyment of Arab protection. Its fall, however, helped to burnish the image of the Byzantine Emperor Basil I, appropriately enough since he was himself of Armenian descent.